headed by the Secretary level official had visited Russia to attend annual meeting of the Indo-Russian Working Group on trade and economic cooperation; and

(d) if so, details thereof with progress made to achieve objectives as referred to in part (a) above?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (d) Yes, Sir. An Indian delegation led by Commerce Secretary had visited Russia from January 23-27, 1997 in connection with the third meeting of the Indo-Russian Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation under the aegis of the Indo-Russian Inter Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation.

During the meeting, a wide range of issues of mutual interest for promotion and enhancing trade and economic cooperation with Russia were deliberated which *inter-alia* include the following important issues:—

- allocation of rupee funds to the experienced Russian organisations in a timely and transparent manner;
- steps to be taken to arrest the decline in the level of bilateral trade;
- to broadbase the basket of goods traded between the two countries;
- to prepare a scheme for consignment exports and to work out suitable modalities in this regard;
- cooperation between the insurance agencies of the two countries;
- to cooperate in facilitating the establishment of joint ventures in both the countries;
- to recommend establishment of a Sub-group on Financial and Banking Matters under the aegis of Working Group on Trade and Economic Cooperation.

India and Russia are traditional partners in trade exchanges and economic cooperation covering a number of areas. With the diversification of the economic cooperation, the volume of bilateral trade is likely to grow further. In order to further encourage Indo-Russian trade, the following trade promotional measures have been undertaken:—

- constant review of trade through Joint Commission mechanism and its Working Groups;
- promotion of dialogue including discussions at the highest level;
- promotion of direct business contact through exchange of delegation, Joint Business Councils, holding of exhibitions, participation in fairs, Buyer-Seller meets, exchange of trade information, etc.; and
- promotion of consignment exports and ensuring greater presence of Indian banks.

Share capital of BHEL

*215. PROF. RAM KAPSE: Will the Minister of INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Morgan Stanley owns 13% of the share capital of BHEL, one of the most promising PSUs, in the country;

(b) whether ABB, a competitor of BHEL, is making moves to pick-up more of BHEL's equity, putting it into a serious position;

(c) if so, details thereof; and

(d) the steps Government propose to take to prevent the take-over of BHEL by MNCs?

THE MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) As on 31.1.97, M/s. Morgan Stanley Asset Management is holding 10.98% of the paid up Share Capital of BHEL;

(b) and (c) As on 31.1.97, ABB is not holding any shares in BHEL and the question of ABB picking up more of BHEL's equity does not arise.

(d) The Government is holding 67.72% of the paid up Share Capital of BHEL. There is at present no proposal of further disinvestment of BHEL's shares. Therefore, the question of take-over of BHEL does not arise at present.

Checking the Price Rise of Essential Commodities

*216 SHRI R. MARGABANDU: Will the Minister of CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the steps Government are taking to control the price hike of essential commodities in the whole country;

(b) whether Government are aware of the abnormal price rise of essential commodities and vegetables in Tamil Nadu; and

(c) whether Government would prevail over State Government of Tamil Nadu to control the price rise?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) The Government has taken a number of steps to control the prices of essential commodities. In order to meet the shortage of wheat, action has been to import wheat upto 2 million tonnes through State Trading Corporation. Apart from certain long term measures to increase the production of essential commodities, imports of commodities which are in short supply are encouraged to augment the availability of these items. Some of the commodities are also supplied through the Public Distribution System and Cooperative Stores on below market prices. State Governments have been asked to take stringent action against hoarders, black marketeers and others indulging in unfair trade practices under the Essential Commodities Act and Prevention of Black Marketing and Maintenance of Supplies of Essential Commodities, Act, etc.

(b) and (c) According to the information available from the Government of Tamil Nadu, the price rise of essential commodities was mainly due to the low production at the producing centres and low arrivals from other centres due to traffic bottlenecks caused during the recent cyclonic floods. The prices of vegetables are showing a declining trend since January. The State Government is taking steps to control the prices by market intervention and discussions with the representatives of the traders. The State Cooperative outlets are also undertaking sale of essential commodities at reasonable prices.

Abolition of Dual Pricing of Sugarcane

*217. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI JANARDHANA POOJARY:

Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have received any representation from farmers to abolish dual pricing of sugarcane;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of the prevailing dual pricing system;

(d) whether Government have also announced new support price;

(e) if so, the details thereof; and

(f) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV): (a) to (c) some representations have been received. One of them from UP, inter-alia, laments the fact that the price of Rs.72/- fixed earlier has been reduced to Rs. 42/-.

In this context it needs, to be pointed out that under the Sugarcane Control Order, 1966 the price of sugarcane is fixed first as Statutory Minimum Price (SMP) under Clause (3) of the Order and then additional price becomes payable under Clause 5 (A) of the said order on